

MONTANA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

2007 GRANT ADMINISTRATION MANUAL

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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INTRODUCTION

If you have begun to turn the pages of this Montana Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Grant Administration Manual, it likely means that you are a local official or employee of a town, city or county recently selected to receive an award of CDBG funds by the Montana Department of Commerce (a "grantee", as you will see your community referred to many times).

As you begin that task of preparing to start up and implement your CDBG project, it is completely understandable that you may have some concerns about the responsibilities you are taking on and how to go about meeting them. There is no question that there is a considerable volume of "red tape" that attaches to the CDBG program. You may feel that you are entering a bureaucratic maze filled with unfamiliar acronyms for various federal and State agencies, programs, and laws. Viewed in total, the mass of laws, regulations, presidential executive orders, and other requirements do initially seem overwhelming.

However, the same skills that you used to compete successfully for a CDBG award will help you through the process of implementing your project. Similar to the process you followed in preparing your CDBG application, we suggest that you follow a step-by-step approach through the various requirements covered in the manual.

You should not be intimidated by the volume of the manual. As you get into the details of this Grant Administration Manual, you will see that because the manual is written to cover all situations, it covers a number of requirements and procedures that probably will not apply to your project at all. In many cases, a particular requirement applies only once and will not have to be dealt with again. In addition, whenever possible, we have provided sample forms and formats for letters, reports, resolutions, and the other varieties of administrative procedures you will have to comply with under federal and state law. We hope that the materials we have provided will make the process of complying with federal and State requirements as easy as possible.

We have tried to make the written discussion of the various requirements as complete as possible, for a reason. In these times of tight budgets, it is impossible for the CDBG staff person assigned as the Department's liaison for your project to provide on-site technical assistance as often as we would like. However, we have found that we can successfully work through most administrative problems over the telephone by using the text and the sample materials as references.

Compliance with the various federal requirements attached to the CDBG program has to be accepted as the cost of doing business with federal funds. Viewed en masse, local officials sometimes wonder if it is all necessary. Viewed individually, the general goal of each requirement usually makes good sense (although the detailed steps required for their implementation may not). Few of us would argue with the need to avoid serious environmental impacts from government funded projects, to avoid collusion or conflicts of interest in government procurement, to ensure proper management of public funds, to ensure that workers on public projects receive full wages for a day's work, and to prevent racial discrimination in the award of financial assistance to low and moderate income families.

The need for securing compliance with federal and State requirements is a responsibility the Department of Commerce must and does take seriously in its monitoring and supervision of local CDBG projects. However, to the extent possible, the Department's oversight of local CDBG projects is committed to simplifying project administration and working with local officials to either prevent problems or correct them before they become serious. Our end goal is to assist you in successfully completing your CDBG project with a minimum of difficulty.

We look forward to working with you on your projects. Please call us if we can be of assistance.

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